

CANTRELL (J.A.)

AN UNUSUAL CASE OF SYPHILIS.

BY

J. ABBOTT CANTRELL, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF DISEASES OF THE SKIN IN THE PHILADELPHIA POLYCLINIC
AND COLLEGE FOR GRADUATES IN MEDICINE; DERMATOLOGIST
TO THE PHILADELPHIA AND ST. AGNES' HOSPITALS.



FROM

THE MEDICAL NEWS,

October 6, 1894.

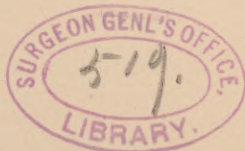
[Reprinted from THE MEDICAL NEWS, October 6, 1894.]

AN UNUSUAL CASE OF SYPHILIS.

BY J. ABBOTT CANTRELL, M.D.,
PROFESSOR OF DISEASES OF THE SKIN IN THE PHILADELPHIA POLYCLINIC
AND COLLEGE FOR GRADUATES IN MEDICINE; DERMATOLOGIST
TO THE PHILADELPHIA AND ST. AGNES' HOSPITALS.

THE following record of a case of syphilis is more than usually interesting, as the symptoms and course of the disease presented very decided irregular conditions during a period covering eighteen months, during a portion of which time the patient was under my care. I wish to emphasize the extreme malignancy of the disease, the persistent cutaneous manifestations, the therapeutic difficulties encountered, and the thorough carelessness of the man in following directions as to treatment.

W. W., a male, forty-three years old, has been under observation for a period covering twelve years. During that time he has been in the habit of taking periodic "sprees," and while each of these would last only one, two, or three days, he nevertheless kept more or less under the influence of liquor for several months consecutively; and although a married man and one of the best of husbands in the interim, he would often, during thesesprees, have a lapse of sexual virtue, which in a number of instances resulted in attacks of gonorrhea. This condition generally responded to proper treatment and was cured in a few days. Unfortunately for him, the last of these spreess occurred about the 15th of November, 1892, while he was away from home, at which time there appeared the initial lesions of syphilis. He permitted



himself to go untreated for about five weeks, at the end of which time he presented himself at my office. On December 24, 1892, the man stated that he had always been in the best of health, with the exception of the preceding troubles. He was five feet seven inches in height, and weighed one-hundred-and-seventy-five pounds.

Upon examination I found an initial lesion just behind the corona glandis and on the superior surface of the penis. I advised the use of the official mercurial ointment, and upon his return one week later the lesion was found to be entirely healed. As he was weak and not at work, I ordered one-sixteenth grain of mercuric chlorid, to be taken every six hours, for its tonic effect only; but it was found, after he had taken five doses, that he became salivated, and the drug was discontinued. After this (January 3, 1893) the patient was lost sight of until April 9th, when he again called, stating that he had had no treatment since last seeing me.

At this visit I found that the man had been suffering from lesions upon the skin for the previous three weeks. Upon removing his clothing I noticed that these lesions were scattered here and there over the body-surface. Upon the face the lesions were situated directly above and between both eyes—"corona veneris;" another was found occupying a position directly above the left eye; another covered the right ala of the nose; there was one immediately below the angle of the jaw on the left side, and one was situated in the median line of the neck below the chin. Each shoulder was the site of a lesion; the left arm upon the outer side contributed four similar lesions, and there were three upon the internal surface. There were also three surrounding the right wrist; nine lesions were encountered upon the chest and abdomen, while only five were seen upon the posterior portion of the trunk. I also found twenty-five lesions upon the left leg, the right contributing ten more. Upon close examination I found that all were examples of the large, flat,

pustular syphiloderm, and that each lesion (all lesions were circinate) ranged in diameter from one-fourth of an inch to two inches, and all were covered with a rupia-like crust, in some instances raised about one-half inch. There was apparently no discharge from any of them, but upon removing one of the crusts I found a decided exudation of pus. I advised mercury protiodid in doses of one-fourth grain to be taken three times a day, and after the man had taken three or four pills I was again confronted with the constitutional effects of the drug. I changed the remedy and gave potassium iodid in small doses, with the understanding that the dose was to be increased.

On June 1st the man complained of severe pain in the head, which, in fact, was only a sign of a cerebral neuralgia; but the pains resembled very much those found in connection with a gumma of the brain. These pains, peculiarly, were more noticeable at night, and only in the daytime when he was alone. Thinking to assist the potassium iodid, of which he was taking fifteen grains three times a day, I advised inunctions of half-strength mercurial ointment. Salivation again occurred after three or four applications, and, of course, these were discontinued, and after a week, all signs of the former characteristic effect of the drug having disappeared, I again gave him the bichlorid, but in doses of $\frac{1}{200}$ of a grain three times a day; but the same effect was produced after a few doses.

On June 10th, at my request, the man was admitted into the wards of St. Agnes' Hospital, under my care. The pains in the head seemed to be very much worse, and in fact so much so that I was sure that a gumma was present. At this time he was given hypodermics of morphin before sleep was induced, and the potassium salt was increased to twenty grains three times a day. These means were continued for two weeks, when he was again removed to his home. On

June 24th the pains had entirely left the head, but at this time he complained of general neuralgia (more properly a myalgia), the pains extending over the entire body, there being no one portion that was exempt. From this time he began to lose power in every muscle, and consequently was confined to bed, and simply remained in the position in which he was placed by the attendant. At times, while lying in one position, the pains would become severe in a portion of his body, and then he would be changed in bed, with relief for possibly a half-hour, when another change would be demanded. During all this time his appetite remained of the best.

On July 6th entire disappearance of the myalgia was noted, but the man was still confined to his bed and unable as yet to move any portion of his body—the head, the trunk, or the extremities. I noticed at this time that he was losing flesh (present weight 125 pounds) so rapidly that I thought that death would surely occur. His voice began to fail. He was taking thirty grains of potassium iodid three times a day. On July 10th he had lost his voice entirely, and on July 14th he had several chills, for which I advised large doses of quinin.

On July 16th the chills were entirely relieved, and I gave cod-liver oil, 3ij, three times a day. On July 23d the man used the right hand slightly and the voice had returned. He had no pain whatsoever. I noticed that the crusts which, up to that time, had remained as described, had fallen off, leaving a spot having the color of raw ham. On July 27th he was able, with the assistance of the nurse, to sit up in bed for an hour. On August 3d the potassium iodid was increased to forty grains three times a day. The man was able to stand on his right foot, but had no power in the left leg whatever. On August 10th he was able to walk about five steps, with slight assistance, but there was still no power in the left leg. On August 20th, by supporting himself, and without other assistance, he could walk five or six feet, and on Septem-

ber 1st, with assistance, he could walk about twenty feet. On September 25th, without other assistance than crutches, he was able to walk twenty-five feet. The iodid was now increased to fifty grains three times a day. On October 20th, with one crutch and one cane, the man could walk about thirty yards; although he still had very slight power in the left leg, he could stand upon the right foot without other support. The lesions showed a very dark pigmentation. On November 1st he walked one hundred yards with the assistance of his crutch and cane. By December 1st he walked one-half mile, having his crutch with him, and on January 1st he walked three miles, still having his crutch with him, because he was afraid to go without it, as he was somewhat unsteady as yet on his feet.

The man was again lost sight of until about the 9th of March, when I saw him on his doorstep, and he stated that he had been wearing some electric apparatus. He was unable to walk, or even to stand on his feet. Since that date I have not seen him.

The Medical News.

Established in 1843.

A WEEKLY MEDICAL NEWSPAPER.

Subscription, \$4.00 per Annum.

The American Journal

OF THE

Medical Sciences.

Established in 1820

A MONTHLY MEDICAL MAGAZINE.

Subscription, \$4.00 per Annum.

COMMUTATION RATE, \$7.50 PER ANNUM.

LEA BROTHERS & CO

PHILADELPHIA.